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NSC BRIEFING

SECRET

25 February 1954

THE SYRIAN SITUATION

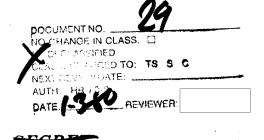
I. Current Situation

Á.	Shishakli ove	erthrown	bу	armv	and
	politicians.				\

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- B. New regime has proclaimed intention to select civilian president. Army officers in background.
 - Mentioned as possible president 77-year-old Hashim al Atasi, who
 was president 1937-39, 1949-51.
 Selected as rallying point for
 military and civilian malcontents.
 - 2. Leading military figure appears to be Captain Mustafa Hamdani, chief of intelligence. Probably supported by other younger officers and present chief of staff.

25 YEAR RE-REVIEW



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II. Immediate prospects in Syria

- A. Uneasy alliance of military and civilian
- B. Initially emphasis likely to be on restoration of constitutional life abolished 5 years ago. in Jan 34 now find
 - 1. Notorious divisions among Syrian politicians likely to renew civilian wrangling that brought military to the fore in 1949.
 - 2. This prospect enhances opportunities for such active social revolutionists as Akram Hawrani.
- C. Meanwhile, military likely to insist on civilian rule which protects army's preeminent position in national affairs.
- D. Military leaders will be engaged in struggle for power within army.

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E. Outlook for Syrian internal stability not bright. Internal dissension invites traditional meddling by other Arab neighbors, particularly Iraq.

Israel may be tempted to make moves to consolidate position in areas disputed with Syria.

III. Implication for United States

- A. Syria in immediate future will be too preoccupied to concern itself with foreign issues.
- B. No progress on economic aid agreement, refugee resettlement and Johnston plan.
- C. Syria for time being will faithfully follow Arab League, will not commit itself on East-West issue. No indication that new leaders anti-Western.

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ECRET 25 February 1954

THE LATEST CRISIS IN SYRIA

- I. Current Situation Not given; re-written
 - A. Reported revolt of 3-6,000 troops in northern cities.
 - Aleppo radio broadcasting incitement to revolt, claiming wide popular and army support.
 - 2. Opposition forces reportedly occupy

 Deir ez Zor, Homs and Hama.
 - B. Shishakli in Damascus apparently controls government and rest of 34,000-man army.
 - Government sending troops and planes northward.
 - 2. Strict censorship; government radio silent.

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given six hours to resign.

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II. Implications for Shishakli

- A. First serious army defection during his four-year-old military dictatorship.
- B. Demonstrates Shishakli's unpopularity.
- C. Situation, following Shishakli's 27

 January move against opposition leaders,
 is most serious challenge to his
 continued hold on Syria.
- D. However, unless more major units of army defect, he will probably remain in power.

1. units

below Damascus joining revolt. If true and if extended, his position will become untenable.

III. Implication for United States

- A. Unlikely Shishakli will ever bring stability and peace to Syria.
- B. His preoccupation with immediate problem leaves little opportunity to move with US on: Economic aid agreement -Johnston plan -- Refugee resettlement.

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***C BRISTING**

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SHISHAKLI AND POSSIBLE SUCCESSORS

1. Shishakli

- A. Forty-five year-old general seized power in 1949 army coup, setting up civilian regime. This discarded in 1951; had himself elected president in July 1953.
 - B. Shishakli maisly concerned with maintaining power. Not committed publicly on East-West issue, privately pro-Westers.

E. Possible successors

If everthrows, likely be replaced by

mather military regime, which to satisfy
opposition to military rule, may set up
civilian regime under former president

Mashim al Atasi or some other figurehead.

We strong group of Syrian politicians in
sight.